



MeTooSTEM Resignation

1 message

[REDACTED] Wed, Apr 24, 2019 at 10:59 PM

[REDACTED] BethAnn M

Dear MeTooSTEM leadership,

This letter is to let you know that we are formally resigning from the MeTooSTEM organization and leadership team. We apologize for the difficult timing; however, in light of recent events we are no longer comfortable continuing to be a part of this organization. There have been many issues that have prevented us from being able to fully support survivors under MeTooSTEM, and we feel the need to detail our reasons for leaving:

1. Lack of transparency, policies and communication within the organization and leadership team. This includes learning about MeTooSTEM initiatives on Twitter at the same time as the public, without any prior discussion with the leadership team. This made it difficult as leadership to answer questions survivors and allies had about MeTooSTEM. In addition, we recently became aware that the Board of Directors for MeTooSTEM (formally under [REDACTED]) was created without our knowledge, when we were told that we would both serve as board members and be involved in its assembly. We assumed leadership was working in good faith to make this happen, and we were misled.
2. Questions about legal and organization steps were met with vague answers or hostility. No organization can function when leadership is kept in the dark about its legal and financial foundation.
3. Similar to point 1, there was little collaborative decision-making. We feel that discussion about MeTooSTEM initiatives is essential amongst the leadership team. Most decisions were made without any input from the leadership team and were made public on Twitter before leadership members had a chance to provide input. Being kept in the dark about many of these decisions until they were made public made it difficult to answer questions during open Zoom calls with the broader MeTooSTEM community. Many of these decisions were made before logistics could be discussed, and it reflects poorly on the organization and leadership team. We were also forced to back decisions that were made without our input or consent.
4. MeTooSTEM receives little input from women of color, and many outside the organization have noticed that it has prioritized the voices of cis-gendered white women. MeTooSTEM should work to advocate for all victims -- not just those that benefit individual leaders of the organization. This was also felt at the leadership level. We, Vidhya and Deanna (being the only women of color in this organization) felt that white leadership input was prioritized over our own. We also have been confused for each other's leadership tasks publicly on Twitter. Lastly, and perhaps the most concerning, when Deanna raised a concern about our non-profit status, it was met with anger and retaliation which was in stark contrast to the responses white leadership has received when they asked similar questions.

5. The majority of the MeTooSTEM organization is not qualified to advise victims of sexual trauma and misconduct. As survivors of sexual harassment and assault, we were often expected to absorb others trauma with no regard for our mental health. In addition to this, we were expected to advise victims on their next steps with no training. There are many vulnerable people looking to MeTooSTEM for answers, and the current leadership is not qualified to provide them.
6. Most importantly, and related to the points above, we no longer feel safe or comfortable voicing our concerns and opinions in this organization, which has become a hostile work environment. Leadership should feel safe to provide the necessary criticism that allows MeTooSTEM to thrive-- especially in an organization that is paving the way for safer academic spaces. There is no equity among the leadership, as certain voices (particularly the women of color in leadership), were silenced and/or met with hostility when they voiced concerns. This is antithetical to MeTooSTEM's mission, and MeTooSTEM leadership must and should be held to higher standards.

With this, we feel it is best to step away. We will continue to engage in advocacy work addressing sexual misconduct in academic settings and wish you all the best with your work at MeTooSTEM.

Respectfully,

Deanna Arsala

Dr. Vidhya Sivakumaran

Dr. Erica Smith